

eternal perspectives

with author Randy Alcorn

Fall/Winter Issue • 2013

Eternity-Minded *Stewardship and Giving*

Plus

Will there be rain and
snow on the New Earth?

Thanksgiving: The Noblest
and Most Joy-Giving Sacrifice

A Grace and Truth
Encounter on the Streets



contents

- 3 **Q&A** Randy Alcorn and Julia Stager



- 4 **Impact: Book Royalties**
- 5 **Update on EPM Finances**
- 6 **A Call to Be Much Alone with God**
Horatius Bonar
- 7 **He Is Always Sovereign**
Randy Alcorn

- 8 **Eternity-Minded Stewardship and Giving**
Randy Alcorn

- 10 **Letter from a Reader: The Joy of Giving**

- 11 **News from EPM**



- 12 **3 Practical Ways You Can Make a Pro-life Impact**
Randy Alcorn

- 12 **Thanksgiving: the Noblest and Most Joy-Giving Sacrifice**
William Law

- 13 **Beauty from Ashes**
Tami Yeager

- 13 **Resting in God's Hands, in All Seasons**
Randy and Nanci Alcorn

- 14 **Seeing a Man the Way God Created Him to Be**
Janie Martin

about

Eternal Perspectives a publication of Eternal Perspective Ministries, seeks to encourage readers to learn to live in light of eternity.

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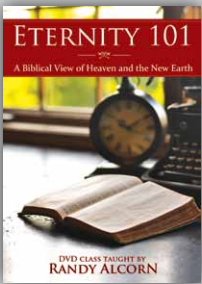
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For an indepth study of Heaven, check out Randy's Eternity 101 DVD Class. Learn more and download our free Eternity 101 study guide at www.epm.org/eternity101



Will there be rain and snow on the New Earth?

In the world to come, will we experience rainfall and snowfall? Some have never thought about it, because they don't think of Heaven as a real place or don't understand the doctrine of the New Earth, where we'll live as resurrected people. Or they assume the New Earth will have bright sunshine, no clouds, no rain, no snow... forever.

In a passage that promises rescue, security, and no more famine or fear for his people, God says, "I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops" (Ezekiel 34:26-27).

We'll see trees bearing fruit on the New Earth. Will they be rained on? Presumably. Will rain turn to snow in higher elevations? Why not? If there's snow, will people play in it, throw snowballs, sled down hillsides like we did as children? Of course. Just as resurrected people will still have eyes, ears, and feet, a resurrected Earth will have rain, snow, and wind. God made our desire to play.

Lightning, thunder, rain, and snow all declare God's greatness (Job 37:3-6). Is there any reason to conclude such things, invented by our God, will not be part of the New Earth? None. Of course, no one will die or be hurt by such weather.

When we live on the New Earth, could we go hiking in a snowstorm without fear of trauma or death? Must the New Earth be tamed, stripped of high peaks, deserts, waterfalls, and snowstorms because these sometimes caused pain and death in this world?

Surely nature, including variations in climate, will be a source of joy and pleasure, not destruction. If we stand amazed now at the wonders of God's great creation, we'll be even more amazed at the greater wonders of that greater and redeemed creation. ■



I'm trying to figure out how strongly to publicly profess my Christian faith, especially online. Do you have any advice?

Answered by Julia Stager, EPM staff

I'm excited to hear your heart for serving God and the potential He's given you to reach people for Him. I think what you're asking can ultimately only be answered between you and the Lord. God calls different people to different things at different times and in different ways. I urge you to pray about how you can best represent Him in your life today.

If you ever feel like you're hiding who you are or are ashamed to be known as a Christian, that's a sign you're not serving God but serving yourself. How God leads you to be a light for Him will likely change over time, but I believe the Holy Spirit will testify in your conscience

whether you're aligned with God's will for your life or veering off His path. I encourage you to continue studying His Word and to seek wise counsel from other godly believers.

The fact that you're asking this question shows you really do long to serve, love and represent Christ well. As a general rule for myself I try to be more vocal with my faith than I'm naturally comfortable with—I don't shout on street corners, but I try to consistently represent Christ to those I'm around in a loving, unafraid, and unashamed way.

May God bless you as you seek to follow Him! ■

impact: book royalties

100% of the royalties from Randy's books are given away: 90% to other worthy Christian organizations and 10% to EPM (to help offset the costs related to the writing/researching/editing of Randy's books, as well as to facilitate the giving away of our books to people all over the world). To date, that's over \$6 million. By His grace, God is using Randy's books to make a difference in the world—and for eternity. We'd like to share with you just one of the ministries EPM supports with the book royalties.



Gotta Go Corporation

Reaching the Forgotten and Abused, in Christ's Name

Gotta Go is a U.S. non-profit focused on spreading the Gospel through community development in Hunan, China by serving the impoverished, enslaved and those without a voice who have never before heard the name Jesus.

They do this through two main projects: The China Work Project (CWP) serves men and boys coming out of prison and migrants and mentally and/or physically challenged homeless coming off the streets; and Healing Hope (HH) serves women and girls who are trapped in sex slavery in brothels. They go where these men and women, boys and girls are—prisons, construction sites, train and bus stations, and brothels in this city of 7 million—to offer the Gospel, discipleship, counseling, medical care, housing, vocational training and employment.

Over 87% who come through CWP and HH choose to surrender their lives to Christ. As spiritual gifts and interests become apparent, the once forgotten and now redeemed slowly become the future leaders of the Hunan church.

If you would like to receive updates and learn more, sign up at www.gottago.cc.



Our Invaluable *Partnership* with You

▶ Some readers might wonder, “Why support a ministry associated with a bestselling author? Why doesn't he just use money from the book royalties to fund all of EPM's expenses?” Randy strongly believes God has directed the Alcorns to give 100% of the book royalties to worthy Christian ministries, including missions, feeding the hungry, prolife and many others. Because Randy and Nanci believe in what EPM is doing, they have recently decided to give 10% of the book royalties to EPM, in light of our ministry needs. God has graciously blessed the sale of Randy's books, and we believe it's partly because the royalties are all given to the Lord. We also believe that EPM benefits from having contributors to our general fund because of the partnership through prayer and accountability.

Join EPM's Prayer Team

Occasionally Randy sends out specific prayer requests related to his writing and speaking ministry. He and his wife Nanci are deeply appreciative of those who pray for him and EPM.

Sign up to receive the updates by email at www.epm.org/subscribe.

Prayer isn't passive, it's active. It's really doing something. Prayer isn't the least we can do, it's the most. —Randy Alcorn

Update on EPM Finances

A Note from Randy Alcorn

Some of you may be aware that this past summer, EPM faced a serious financial shortfall for our third summer in a row. Of the six times in our 23-year history that we've had to publicly share our financial needs, three were in the last three years—despite our efforts to avoid this type of situation.

People generously came forward with small and large amounts, and we're grateful for each gift. Our finances have stabilized; God provided wonderfully and deserves the praise for all of this.

However, we're continuing to 1) carefully analyze expenditures 2) ask the Lord to provide for us over the long-haul, with sufficient finances that we'll be able to save money to sustain us through summertime when giving is historically at its lowest.

It is EPM's conviction never to beg for funds. However, we don't believe it's wrong to share a legitimate need, considering Paul's example: "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced" (2 Corinthians 1:8). After sharing about our financial status last June, one of the things we heard several times is, "We never knew you had any needs. Thank you for letting us know!"

If someone were to ask what EPM's greatest financial need is today, we would say it is new monthly supporters. This would stabilize us long-term, allowing cash flow to continue during the lean months. After your commitment to your local church, if and only if God so leads and you're willing to consider giving monthly—whatever size the amount—we'd be deeply appreciative. (See below for giving information.)

I want to also say a special thanks for the ongoing support of our current monthly donors. You are the backbone of this ministry. I am profoundly grateful for your kind support, in some cases for the past 23 years!

Above all, we value your prayers. Daily we are humbled and amazed to see remarkable responses from people worldwide who are being touched by this ministry. Thank you for lifting us up before our King.

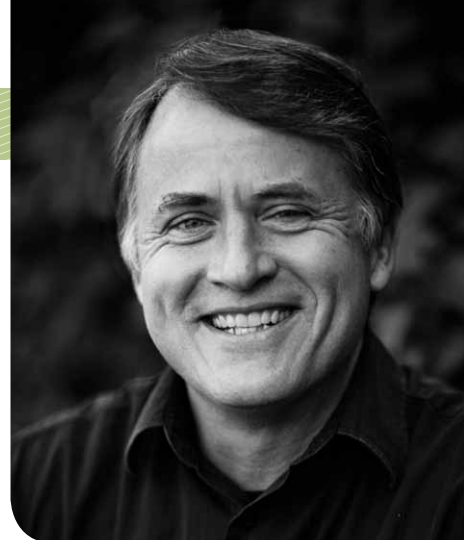
Profoundly grateful to our God of grace,



Convenient Monthly Giving

We offer the option of donating by EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer), which allows you to transfer money from your checking or savings account directly to EPM. You can also set up recurring gifts using EFT or a debit/credit card. We hope this will be a convenient option for our donors, with the added benefit of no checks to write and no postage to pay!

You can donate online at www.epm.org/donate or call our toll-free line at (877) 376-4567 for assistance. And, of course, you can always send a check to: EPM, 39085 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 206, Sandy, OR 97055.



To learn more about how Eternal Perspective Ministries is making an eternal difference around the world for Christ, we invite you to watch our short video "Randy's Books and EPM's Mission" at www.epm.org/about-us.

How does EPM cover its operating expenses?

Books purchased from EPM: Profits benefit our general fund.

General fund donations: These donations support our operating expenses and allow Randy and Nanci to continue giving away 100% of the royalties: 90% to other worthy Christian organizations and 10% to EPM (to help offset the costs related to the writing/researching/editing of Randy's books, as well as to facilitate the giving away of our books to people all over the world.)

Learn more about our finances at www.epm.org/finances.



A Call to Be Much Alone with God



Be much alone with God. Do not put Him off with a quarter of an hour morning and evening. Take time to get thoroughly acquainted. Converse over everything with Him...every thought, feeling, wish, plan, and doubt to Him. He wants converse with His creatures; shall His creatures not want converse with Him? He wants, not merely to be on "good terms" with you, if one may use man's phrase, but to be intimate. Shall you decline the intimacy and be satisfied with mere acquaintance? What! Intimate with the world, with friends, with neighbors, with politicians, with philosophers, with naturalists, or with poets; but not with God? That would look ill indeed. Folly, to prefer the clay to the potter, the marble to the sculptor, this little earth and its lesser creatures to the mighty Maker of the universe, the great "All and in all"!

—Horatius Bonar

Scottish churchman and hymnist, 1808-1889

He Is Always SOVEREIGN

By Randy Alcorn

Is God sovereign only when I get my way, or is He always sovereign? The God who's sovereign in small things also controls the big ones.

The One in control of the universe has His time and place for all of us. Knowing this should help us walk by faith as we seek His face about what to do and where to go next. He is sovereign, and is not taken by surprise. He is the God of providence who raises up not just Esther, but each of us for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).

The true test of our belief in a sovereign God is when we have a week of rain on a long-awaited camping trip, or the washer—with our best delicate clothes in it—fills with muddy water from a broken water main (this happened to my wife Nanci). Is God sovereign when He deals with the rise and fall of empires but not when my tent leaks or my favorite shirt is ruined? Is He always sovereign or just when I get my way?

I hope you have a big view of God and His sovereignty. He is a God of all greatness. Don't underestimate Him. ■

PERSPECTIVES FROM GOD'S WORD

“...for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isaiah 46:9).

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

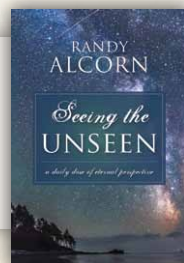
PERSPECTIVES FROM GOD'S PEOPLE

“The sovereignty of God is the one impregnable rock to which the suffering human heart must cling. The circumstances surrounding our lives are no accident: they may be the work of evil, but that evil is held firmly within the mighty hand of our sovereign God.” —Margaret Clarkson

“Most Christians salute the sovereignty of God but believe in the sovereignty of man.” —R. C. Sproul



Did you enjoy this excerpt from Randy's new devotional *Seeing the Unseen*? See this magazine's back cover for more information and a "buy-two-get-one-free" special. Read a longer excerpt online and order at www.epm.org/unseen.





Eternity- Minded Stewardship and Giving

By Randy Alcorn

How we handle money
and possessions
demonstrates who we
really believe is their
true owner—God or us.

Concerning money and possessions, the Bible is sometimes extreme, sometimes shocking. When we come to Scripture, it's for comfort, not for assaults against our worldview, right? Let *God* talk about love and grace, thank you. Let *us* talk about money and possessions—then do with them whatever we please.

Were we honest, that's what many of us would say.

Some believers ask each other tough questions: "Have you been spending time in the Word? Sharing your faith? Guarding your sexual purity?" Yet how often do we ask, "Are you winning the battle against materialism?" Or, "Have you been peeking at those tempting magazines and websites? You know, the ones that entice you to greed?"

People are more open even about their sexual struggles than about battling materialism, which may be the final frontier. Some churches do talk about getting out of debt. I applaud that. But you can be debt free and still be stingy and greedy. We don't need to become smarter materialists; we need to repent of materialism and become smart *stewards*.

Jesus sees our hearts and knows us well. He doesn't call all disciples to give away everything. He *does* call us to take radical action that breaks our bondage to money and possessions, freeing us to live under His lordship. He calls all of us to dethrone all secondary treasures in order to elevate Him as our primary treasure. If we value anything or anyone more than we value Jesus, we are not His disciples.

What we do with our money doesn't simply indicate where our heart *is*. According to Jesus, it determines where our heart *goes*. If our heart is where our treasure is (Matthew 6:19-21), then when we move our treasure somewhere else, our heart follows. This is a remarkable truth. If I want my heart somewhere I need to put my money there.

When people asked John the Baptist what they should do to bear the fruit of repentance, he told them to share their clothes and food with the poor. Then he instructed tax collectors not to collect and pocket extra money. Finally, he told soldiers not to extort money and accuse falsely, and to be content with their wages (Luke 3:7-14).

No one had asked John about money and possessions. Yet his answers showed that John couldn't talk about spiritual change without addressing how people handle material things.

If John the Baptist were to visit us today, what conclusions would he draw about our attitudes and actions toward money and possessions? Would the evidence convince him we are true followers of Jesus? Or would he see us as baptized versions of the world's self-preoccupied materialists?

Microsoft executive Tricia Mayer wrote me, "Stewardship is the Christian life. It is about what we do with every resource given to us, every day we walk the earth, and every relationship we have. The difficult task of stewardship is mustering the discipline and will

to manage the problem child called money."

A steward is entrusted with wealth or property that does not belong to him. It's his responsibility to manage that wealth in the best interests of, and according to the stated wishes of, the owner. God has given us life, time, talents, money, possessions, family, and His grace. In each case He evaluates what we do with what He's entrusted to us.

The steward is granted by the owner sufficient resources and the authority to carry out his designated responsibilities. When it comes to financial stewardship, God hasn't handed us a standardized checklist to mark off. Rather, He has provided us His Word with principles for effective financial stewardship—principles we have to wrestle with. A responsible steward consults the Owner, seeking His direction. This requires insight and wisdom far beyond our own. Scripture says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault" (James 1:5).

Do you truly desire God's wisdom and empowerment in making difficult stewardship decisions (and evaluating your own heart)? *Then ask*. He won't leave you in the dark. He has given you His Word and His Spirit to guide you.

A responsible steward consults the Owner, seeking His direction.

- And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth (Deut. 8:18).
- The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up (1 Sam. 2:7).
- Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all (1 Chron. 29:12).

Stewardship is living in the light of these truths. It's living with the awareness that we are managers, not owners, of what God has entrusted to us for this brief season. How we handle money and possessions demonstrates who we *really* believe is their true owner—God or us.

John Wesley offered four questions to help decide how to spend money. Notice how the last three flow directly out of the first one:

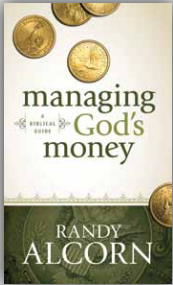
- In spending this money, am I acting as if I owned it, or am I acting as the Lord's trustee?
- What Scripture requires me to spend this money in this way?
- Can I offer up this purchase as a sacrifice to the Lord?
- Will God reward me for this expenditure at the resurrection of the just?

If we really believe God is the owner of everything, shouldn't we regularly be asking Him, "What do you want me to do with your money and your possessions?" And shouldn't we be open to the possibility that He may want us to share large portions of His assets with those whose needs are greater than ours?

I spoke with a man who'd read *The Treasure Principle*, my book on giving. He owns a profitable business and believes for the first time that he knows why God has

more

Explore Randy's books on giving and stewardship, including *Managing God's Money* and *The Treasure Principle*, at www.epm.org/store/giving.



Read Randy's blog "Eleven Giving Guidelines to Fight the Pull of Materialism" at www.epm.org/blog/11giving

"As we began to give, God began to release such joy!"

Do you have a story of how God has grown and stretched you in the area of generosity? We'd love to hear from you. Send us your story at www.epm.org/contact-us.

blessed him financially. It's not so he can drive nicer cars and live in a nicer house. It's to give it to build God's kingdom. I told him about several different missions groups and pro-life projects, and ways to help persecuted Christians. I wish you could have heard the excitement in his voice as he walked away determined to liquidate more earthly assets and dramatically expand his eternal investment portfolio!

This man followed through, and has given more and more over the years. He isn't reluctant and guilt-ridden. He's been liberated from material bondage, and is thrilled to have gotten onboard with what matters! He's like the man who

finds priceless treasure hidden in the field, "Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matt. 13:44). Do we pity the man for his sacrifices? No! We envy him both for his treasure and his joy.

If God is speaking to you, listen. *Nothing's more fleeting than the moment of conviction. Never procrastinate obedience.* Once we stand before His throne, it will be too late to go back and reclaim a lifetime of squandered opportunities. Gazing into the eyes of the Christ we treasure, we'll know exactly how we should have lived. God has given us His Word so we don't have to wait to die to find out. And He's given us His Spirit to empower us to live that way *now*. ■

Letter from a Reader: The Joy of Giving

Money, Possessions, and Eternity and Heaven have had a very profound effect on my thinking—and my bank account—over the last year. We first downloaded the Kindle version of *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*. My husband began reading right away, but I wasn't interested. We've always been responsible with money, giving generously, and not in debt, so I didn't think I needed to read it.

But eventually I gave in and surprisingly found it interesting and challenging. In particular, your comments on Revelation 13:6 about the enemy seeking to steal our desire for Heaven caught my attention, so I began reading your book *Heaven* as well. Meditating on Heaven has given me a whole new perspective, making discontent circumstances seem so much smaller and insignificant. It also made me want to give a lot more—not because I felt guilty, but because I was excited about Heaven!

About the same time we were looking forward to my husband's yearly work bonus, and using it this year for much-needed new kitchen counter tops. After reading your books though, my husband suggested that we give the entire bonus away to kingdom work, and I was totally on board with that idea. As we began to give, God began to release such joy!

Now one year later, I am convinced that there is absolutely nothing on this earth I could have bought myself with that money

that would have given me half as much pleasure as I received from giving it all away. We helped friends with adoption costs, helped a missionary family come home for furlough, bought a used car for a young pastor at church, gave monthly support for Bible translation, and gave toward a large year-end need at our church.

The more we gave, the easier it was to give. We even designated part of the bonus money for each of our elementary-age children to choose how to give away, teaching them about stewardship and prayer in the process. We have been blessed by going to a new level of giving and in the future would like to continue stepping out in faith to give more.

Now it is bonus time again, and my counter cracks have turned into bigger chips. We have set up a small savings fund to replace the counters someday. It will take more time to get new kitchen counters this way, and our house won't get paid off as early as we'd planned, but I am happy to send my building materials ahead to eternity. Whenever I look at the chips in my counter, I am reminded of the children of prisoners that we sent to camp this summer, the Bibles we sent to persecuted countries, and those who will soon have God's Word in their own language through translation work we have helped with. What are counter tops compared to all of that? — A. K. ■

Need gift ideas? Check out EPM's Christmas Gift Guide

Go to www.epm.org/christmasguide to find impactful, affordable book ideas for everyone on your list! Find gifts under \$10, gifts for teens, and more. When you purchase Randy's books from EPM's store, the profits go directly to support the work of our ministry and fund our operating expenses.

www.epm.org/christmasguide



Read Randy's article "Changing Christmas in Our Families and In Our Hearts" for thoughts on making your Christmas season meaningful this year: www.epm.org/changingchristmas

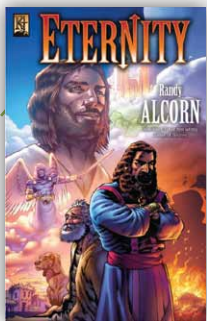


You're invited to a Facebook chat with Randy Alcorn about Heaven!

Join us for a Facebook chat with Randy on **Wednesday, December 4 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. PT.** We'll be discussing the topic of Heaven and the New Earth. To participate, go to EPM's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EPMinistries) and you'll see a photo that says, "Join our chat!" The chat will take place in the comments of the photo. We hope you'll join us with your questions and thoughts as we discuss and look forward to eternity with our Lord.

save
the
date

A Report on the impact of *Eternity*



We'd like to thank all of you who have prayed for the impact of Randy's *Eternity* graphic novel. We recently received a note from a Youth for Christ worker telling us about a boy who came to Christ after reading it. Praise the Lord!

One prisoner who read the book wrote, "This comic book is so cool! I opened it and couldn't stop reading!" Please continue to pray with us that many more readers will enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Download our free study guide

Go to www.epm.org/eternity to access our free printable 12-page study guide for *Eternity* (great for group or individual study), and/or to order the book from our online store. It's available for \$13.59 (retail \$16.99). You can purchase the book for \$10.00 per copy when you order 10 or more.



Hear Randy at the Ignite Youth Conference 2014

Randy will speak on the topics of evangelism and eternal perspective at the Ignite! Youth Leadership Conference in Des Moines, Iowa on March 14-15, 2014. Learn more and register at www.ignite-youth.org.

Watch Randy's message from the 2013 Desiring God National Conference



Go to www.epm.org/dg2013 to watch Randy share on "C. S. Lewis on Heaven and the New Earth: God's Eternal Remedy to the Problem of Evil and Suffering."

3 Practical Ways You Can Make a Pro-life Impact

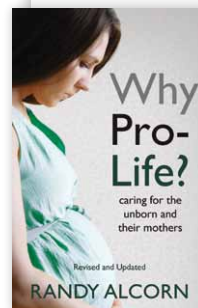
By Randy Alcorn

- 1 Pray regularly for prolife ministries, churches, mothers, and babies. If the darkness of child-killing is to be overcome, it will require spiritual warfare, fought with humble and persistent prayer (Ephesians 6:10–20).
- 2 Give regular visibility to the issue of abortion in conversations and in places such as blogs and social media. Scripture says to speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves (Proverbs 31:8–9). It's vitally important that we approach subjects such as abortion in a Christlike manner, full of grace and truth (see John 1:14).
- 3 Spearhead a pro-life ministry in your church, or find one in your area (visit www.care-net.org) and consider donating time, money, equipment, clothes, and professional skills.

See www.epm.org/helpunborn for more ideas of ways to help the unborn and their mothers.



Be intelligently and graciously informed



Infused with grace and compassion, and grounded in medical science and psychological studies, Randy's book *Why ProLife?* presents a solid case for defending both unborn children and their mothers.

EPM offers significant quantity discounts on *Why ProLife?*. See www.epm.org/whyprolife to learn more.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is January 19, 2014.

Thanksgiving

By William Law (English cleric and theological writer, 1686–1761)

from *A Serious Call To a Devout and Holy Life*

The Noblest and Most Joy-Giving Sacrifice

Would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not he who gives most alms or is most eminent for temperance,

chastity, or justice; but it is he who is always thankful to God, who wills everything that God willeth, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.

...If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing. Could you therefore work miracles, you could

not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit, for it heals with a word speaking, and turns all that it touches into happiness.

...though it be the noblest sacrifice that the greatest Saint can offer unto God, yet is it not tied to any time, or place, or great occasion but is always in your power and may be the exercise of every day. For the common events of every day are sufficient to discover and exercise this temper and may plainly show you how far you are governed in all your actions by this thankful spirit. ■

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you (Jonah 2:9).



Beauty from Ashes

By Tami Yeager

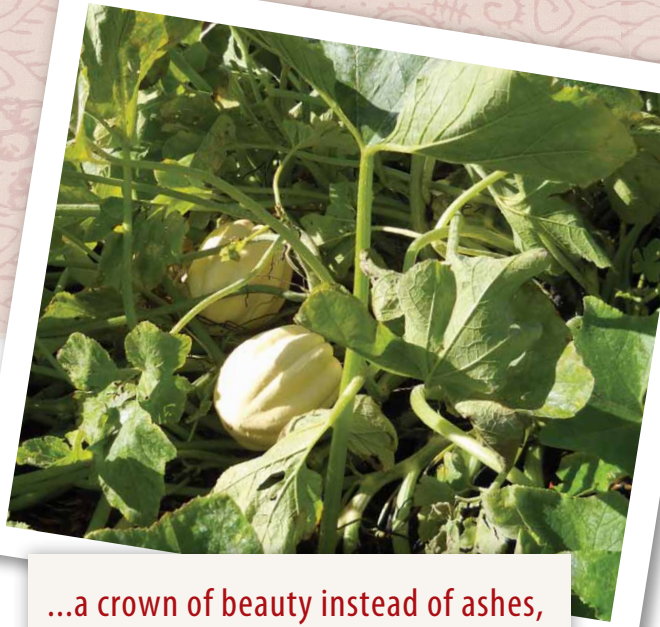
Where we live we are able to burn our yard debris during certain times of the year. Each fall we clean up dead and dying plants and toss them into the burn pile, having deemed each plant as having served its purpose and its season having come to an end. When we do burn the pile, the fire burns extremely hot, and because of its size and intensity, it will often smolder for days. When it does eventually burn out, what remains is a large pile of ash.

This last spring a beautiful squash plant rose from the burn pile. Not a single person in our family planted it or tended it once it sprouted from the ashes. Yet this plant is the healthiest plant on the property. The seed survived the heat of the fire last fall and the freeze of winter, and the plant weathered the 80-degree, sun-filled days of this past summer. Not only did it survive all of those extreme elements, but it has also bore an abundance of fruit—there are over nine squash growing on this healthy plant!

The beauty of the abundant life rising from the ash pile has captivated me. I have found my thoughts consumed with what God is saying through this plant that came to life from the ashes. It comforts me to know that God can bring beauty from ashes, and also reminds me that there is great potential for seeds buried in the soil of disappointment, sorrow, and despair.

Never underestimate the potential of a seed buried deep within the ashes. The fire that seemed to be relentless was in reality creating the perfect soil for new life. ■

Tami Yeager is EPM's bookkeeper. Because of her passion for the persecuted church, she also serves as a volunteer area coordinator for Voice of the Martyrs. Tami and her husband Jeff have five children and seven grandchildren.



...a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead
of a spirit of despair.

Isaiah 61:3

Resting in God's Hands, in All Seasons

There is a time to work for change, a time to leave change to God, and a time to accept the fact that change will probably not happen. Our own rule of thumb is "Don't play dead, but don't play God."

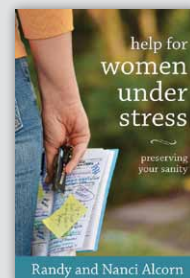
Adapt to what you cannot control, control and influence what you can, and leave the rest to Him. **And remember—when you do, it will be in infinitely bigger, better, stronger hands than yours.**


—Randy and Nanci Alcorn, *Help for Women Under Stress*



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Seeing a Man the Way God Created Him to Be

A Grace and Truth Encounter on the Streets

By Janie Martin

Downtown Portland is a busy place and full of needy people. On this particular day I had forgotten my bag of goodies which I normally give out to those asking for money, so I was street hopping to avoid contact with anyone.

I managed to weave my way through the early morning foot traffic but not so quickly that I wasn't seeing a very lost generation. My heart was burdened and I was reminded there is a place called Hell for those without God's gift of Jesus' sacrifice. I began to pray for certain souls on the streets. I was almost to my car, but just as I was waiting for the last traffic light to change, I heard a voice from behind say, "Excuse me ma'am, but do you happen to have a dollar I could borrow?"

I turned to see a young man of about 20 with disheveled

hair, piercings lining his upper lip and several in his nose, and tattoos up and down his arms. "No, I'm sorry, I don't give money," I said. "But...what is it that you need?"

"I just need a bus ticket," he replied. *Sure, a bus ticket, I thought.*

"Ok, how about we go together and I'll buy you a ticket." As we walked, he shared about himself. I found out his name was Gary and he was from Seattle.

"So, what do you do all day?" I casually asked.

Gary answered all my questions. He had tried to find a job but no one would hire him. He admitted to having an alcohol problem.

We continued to walk and talk, and feeling great compassion for him I said, "Gary, I know you probably have already heard this before but...you really need the Lord."

He backed up. "Now wait a second!" With chest out, arms upward, palms showing, he declared, "I don't need religion."

"I'm not talking about religion," I said. "I'm talking about a relationship with the One who created you, and that is very different than religion."

Gary began with a series of objections. Finally he said, "Why do Christians hate gays so much? I'm gay. What's wrong with that?"

I was saddened that Christians were known to him for their hate. "You know, I'm a Jesus follower," I said, "and I sin, too..."

"That's not sin, that's just who I am!" he responded.

"Just a second. I want to define for you what I believe sin is," I told him. "God has created us all with a design. And when we go against the design, that's what I mean by sin. I sometimes go against His design too, but when I do I first acknowledge it and then turn from it back towards the design He created me for."

Gary didn't appear to be threatened by me. With his age and the way he related, he seemed as though he could be one of my own children. I left it at that until he asked me if I knew of a preacher who stands on the street corner with a sign saying "God hates gays!"

I replied as kindly as I could, "I don't know that man personally. But that's self-righteousness. The Bible says that none of us are righteous in and of ourselves. That's why we need Jesus."

We continued talking until we arrived at the MAX ticket machine. As I reached out my hand to choose the ticket amount, I sensed the Holy Spirit telling me that I needed to buy him a 7-day ticket. I turned to him and said, "You know, I really would like to help you out. Could you use a 7-day ticket?"

Gary's eyes became wide with unbelief. "You don't need to buy me a 7-day ticket. One day is fine. That is way too expensive!"

"Well, my money is not my money," I told him. "It's God's money and if this is the way He wants to use His money today, then that's how He will use it."

After I purchased the ticket and gave it to him, he backed up, visibly touched. Suddenly Gary asked, "I just want your real opinion. What do you think about the LGBTQ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer]?"

I looked at him and said, "Gary, I just really believe God has created everything with a design and a purpose in mind. A nut was made for a bolt. There is a distinct design. Some of the things I've heard...I just can't imagine that's the design God created."

He defended himself. "But it's an over-populated world and we keep the population down. Besides, I know two men who are fathers to their son and they make great parents."

"I don't deny that it's possible for two men to love a child," I told him. "But God did create man and woman differently and that's a scientifically proven fact. They both come together and give life and something unique

by design to that child."

He sighed. "But I could never be attracted to a woman like that!"

"You don't have to be," I replied. "My brother-in-law lives in Asia, is 52 and celibate, and is telling people about Jesus. We are abundantly more than just sexual beings."

"But look at me!" he exclaimed. "I'm dressed so feminine." I looked at him—he was wearing casual shorts and a top—and I honestly didn't think he was. So I said, "I don't think you look feminine."

"But look at my purse!" Gary turned, and for the first time I noticed the large green handbag hanging from behind his shoulder.

I shrugged. "Guys in Europe carry purses!"

I looked him straight in the eye and at that moment, I saw the man who God created him to be. "Gary," I said, "You look like a real *man* to me." I will never forget the look on his face. "Thank you," he said genuinely, and hugged me.

I told him one more time, "Please just go and look at who Jesus is. Jesus said 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me' and 'Seek first the kingdom of God and these things shall be added to you.'" He nodded meekly. "You've convinced me. I think I will now."

I directed him to the local street mission and a downtown church to find out more about Jesus. "Please go to one of those places. They could help you." With one last objection he said, "But they might judge me."

"Yes, you're right, some will," I replied. "But Jesus followers will want to help you." Softly I added, "And you have to admit that you judged me when we first met."

He nodded yes and left.

Please join me in praying for Gary, that he might come to know the true Jesus and follow Him, too. Jesus is the only One who can change a person's heart and we must direct people to Him. ■

I told him one more time, "Please just go and look at who Jesus is. Jesus said 'I am the way, the truth and the life.'"

Janie Martin is a devoted wife to Jonathan and the mother of three children. The Martin family were global outreach (GO) workers in China for 10 years before Jonathan accepted the position of GO Pastor at Good Shepherd Community Church in Boring, Oregon (Randy and Nanci's home church).

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Watch Janie share about meeting Gary at www.vimeo.com/68247362.



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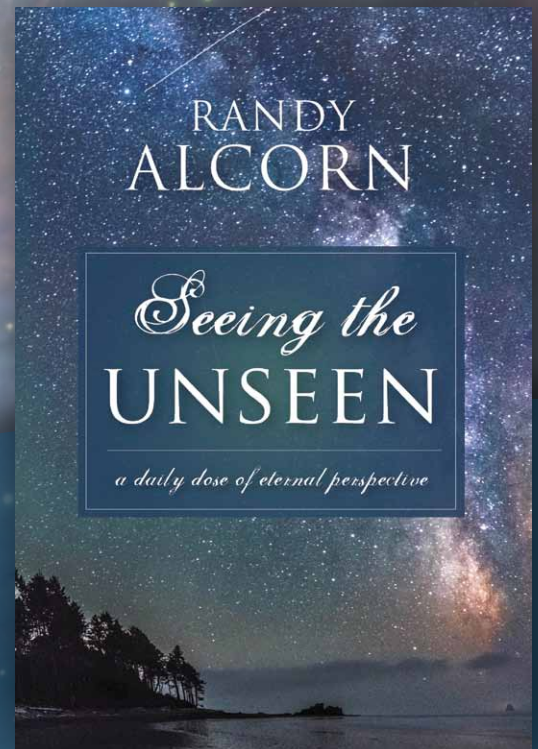
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